

Managing fire risks

Guidelines for events running during periods of hot, dry weather



Introduction

Event organisers should be aware of the fire risks associated with motor sport. During periods of hot, dry weather, additional consideration should be given to the environmental factors which may increase the risk.

Organising clubs should work closely with landowners to ensure that consideration is given to increased risks and appropriate measures are put in place.

Risk Factors

The following factors should be taken into consideration when reviewing the fire safety arrangements for your event:

- Presence of combustible materials and dry fuel; sawdust, leaves, dried grass & hay
- Use of bales for safety barriers
- Location of fuelling activities
- Storage of fuel and other flammable products
- Proximity of paddocks / service areas to combustible materials and dry vegetation
- Sources of ignition for fires may be sparks, contact with hot parts of vehicles or carelessly discarded cigarettes

Risk Controls

Pre-Event:

Information regarding current conditions at the venue should be reviewed. For temporary venues, an additional recce just prior to the event will assist in gathering this information.

Where possible, dry fuel should be removed from the environs of the track, course or stage. In forest areas where trees have recently been felled, there will be dry residue which can be easily ignited. Grass cutting or harvesting activities will generate residue which will be dry and highly combustible. Discussions with landowners in advance of events may lead to minor changes either to the event plan or to the landowner's plan of works.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or wildlife sensitive areas may have stricter restrictions and event organisers may find that these areas are no longer available for motor sport events.

Grass verges on venues which require a track licence must be kept mowed. Consider clearing a wider verge and ensure all grass residue is removed.

If straw bales are to be used as safety barriers on your event, they will need to be regularly dampened down. This will require significant amounts of water and may be unachievable due to local water authority controls. Bales used for safety cannot be removed without an acceptable alternative. If the barrier is a requirement of the track licence, approval in writing must be obtained from the MSA Safety Department.

Spectator areas may need to be reviewed. Areas within close proximity to combustible materials should be avoided and spectators may need to be reminded of the risks of fire.

Review the location of firefighting equipment. Additional extinguishers may be required. Competitors should always be made aware of the event emergency arrangements, but additional emphasis should be made of the fire risks and planned response. It is essential that a competitor who may be required to make a call to emergency services is able to accurately detail their location.

In remote areas where telephone signal may be limited, ensure that there is a means of contacting the emergency services and the incident plan is known to all officials.

On Event:

Fuel and highly flammable materials must always be stored out of direct sunlight and away from sources of ignition and other combustible materials.

Glass and bottles should not be left in locations where they can concentrate light rays and potentially start a fire. Adequate waste facilities and clear up arrangements should be in place. Restrictions on the use of barbecues should be in place. Designated areas may still be appropriate but there must be arrangements to dealing with a fire.

Attendees on event should be reminded to ensure that cigarettes are discarded responsibly. A bucket of sand may be an appropriate solution.

At the end of the event, safely remove all waste from the site and ensure that competitors are not disposing of flammable substances.

In the event of an incident which does or could result in fire:

- Immediately raise the alarm
- If possible and without causing risk of injury, remove the source of ignition from the fuel
- If the fire can be tackled safely, do so, and if extinguished, be aware of the risk of reignition – a fire watch will need to be maintained for a minimum of 30 mins
- As soon as it becomes evident that the fire may not be able to be controlled, call the fire and rescue service on 999.
- If a fire and rescue response is required, prepare for their arrival. Assign the responsibility to individuals who will direct the emergency services to the scene as quickly as possible. Keep onlookers clear.
- Don't attempt to tackle fires that can't be put out with a bucket of water – leave the area as quickly as possible.
- Ensure all spectators, competitors and officials are moved to a safe area.
- If the wind direction is towards paddock or service park areas, consider moving vehicles. Fire can travel quickly and an early evacuation may be a sensible approach.
- Your decision on the running of the event will need to take into consideration the resources you have and the potential for a repeat incident.

Remember: Do not be afraid to make that call – the Fire and Rescue Service would rather attend to a well-intended false alarm than have an unreported incident turn into a major wildfire